

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 288747

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING; OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR AMBASSADORS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 455 - DECEMBER 2, 1977
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1. EGYPT. WHILE CURRENT ATTENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
TENDS TO FOCUS ON THE REACTION OF OTHER ARAB PARTIES TO
RECENT EGYPTIAN INITIATIVES, SADAT'S ULTIMATE ABILITY
TO SURVIVE WHATEVER STORMS MAY ERUPT DEPENDS ON THE
REACTION OF KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EGYPTIAN POPULATION, IN
PARTICULAR THE ARMED FORCES.

2. EGYPTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD REGIONAL AFFAIRS TRADITIONAL-
LY REFLECT TWO POTENTIALLY CONFLICTING ELEMENTS:

(A) EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM, WHICH DEMANDS THAT THE SINAI BE RECOVERED, STRESSES PAST EGYPTIAN SACRIFICES FOR ARAB CAUSE, EXPECTS EGYPT TO BE THE AREA LEADER, AND DISDAINS THE WEAKER ARAB STATES WHO FAIL TO FOLLOW WHERE EGYPT LEADS.

(B) EGYPT'S PAN-ARAB RESPONSIBILITIES, WHICH DICTATE THAT EGYPT'S LEADERSHIP ROLE WILL INCLUDE SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF OTHER ARAB ACTORS WHO, BECAUSE THEY ARE

LESS POWERFUL THAN EGYPT, SHOULD NOT BE ABANDONED IN THE STRUGGLE WITH ISRAEL.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT SADAT'S DRAMATIC INITIATIVES MAY HAVE BEEN PROMPTED BY HIS OWN ASSESSMENT THAT HIS DOMESTIC SITUATION MIGHT HAVE WORSENERD IF HE DID NOT ACT. THAT ASSESSMENT WAS MOST LIKELY BASED ON THREE CRITICAL BASIC FACTORS:

(A) RECOVERY OF THE SINAI SEEMED A LONG WAY OFF, WITH DISCUSSIONS BOGGED DOWN IN PROCEDURAL ISSUES.

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(B) THE MILITARY OPTION DID NOT APPEAR CREDIBLE AND, IF EXERCIZED, WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE THE LOSS OF WHAT WAS GAINED IN 1973.

(C) THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE URBAN POPULATION IS SERIOUS, POSING THE THREAT OF WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT.

4. AS A RESULT OF HIS BOLD STROKE, SADAT SEES HIMSELF AS HAVING THRUST EGYPT BACK INTO ITS "PROPER" LEADERSHIP ROLE, CREATED NEW HOPE FOR REGAINING THE SINAI, AND PRESENTED HIMSELF AS THE SEEKER OF PEACE ON BEHALF OF ALL ARABS.

5. SADAT IS CONTINUING TO RECEIVE STRONG POPULAR SUPPORT AT HOME. EGYPTIANS PARTICULARLY SEEM TO FAVOR THE EVIDENT DISCOMFITURE WHICH EGYPTIAN-INSPIRED EVENTS HAVE CAUSED FOR ISRAEL, SYRIA, AND THE GREAT POWERS. THEY LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT STAGE OF THE SCENARIO, IN WHICH THEY HOPE THAT SADAT'S DETERMINATION TO END EGYPT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONFLICT WILL PRODUCE CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAEL AND THE GRUDGING PARTICIPATION OF SYRIA.

6. NEVERTHELESS, SHOULD SADAT FEEL COMPELLED TO ABANDON THE QUEST FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND SEEK INSTEAD A SEPARATE DEAL WITH ISRAEL, THE PUBLIC MOOD COULD CHANGE ABRUPTLY. THE DEGREE OF DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE ARMED FORCES WOULD DEPEND LARGELY ON WHAT HAD PRECEDED THE SHIFT.

7. IN ESSENCE, IF SADAT CAN SHOW THAT HE HAS RECEIVED CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAEL THAT ARE MEANINGFUL IN A PAN-ARAB CONTEXT, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, AND IF SYRIA AND REPRESENTATIVE PALESTINIANS THEN REFUSE TO JOIN THE

NEGOTIATIONS, SADAT COULD PROBABLY JUSTIFY TO THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP, AN ATTEMPT
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TO STRIKE A SEPARATE DEAL, IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH ISRAELI CONCESSIONS, IT BECOMES VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT THE REACTION TO A BILATERAL AGREEMENT; ELEMENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES WOULD BE TORN BETWEEN THE PROSPECTS OF RECOVERING THE SINAI WITHOUT A WAR, FOR WHICH THEY ARE ILL-PREPARED, AND BEING HELD UP TO THE CHARGE OF ABANDONING THE WIDER ARAB STRUGGLE.

8. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE ROLE OF SAUDI ARABIA BECOMES CRUCIAL. ITS READINESS TO ASSIST SADAT WOULD BE MADE EASIER IF SYRIA AND APPROPRIATE PALESTINIANS, GIVEN A CHANCE TO NEGOTIATE WITH AN ISRAEL PERCEIVED AS READY TO MAKE SERIOUS CONCESSIONS, FAILED TO SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY. SIGNS OF ISRAELI READINESS TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY WOULD ALSO INCREASE THE SAUDIS' WILLINGNESS TO WEIGH IN WITH THE SYRIANS AND THE FATAH LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF NEGOTIATIONS--SOMETHING THE SAUDIS PROBABLY COULD NOT DO IN THE ABSENCE OF MEANINGFUL GESTURES FROM ISRAEL.

9. COMMENTING ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAIRO CONFERENCE, A SENIOR EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY CAIRO THAT HE EXPECTED THE MEETING TO FIRST ADDRESS THE MODALITIES OF GETTING TO GENEVA AND THE QUESTION OF OBTAINING THE PARTICIPATION OF OTHER PARTIES THERE, INCLUDING SYRIA AND THE PLO. THE OFFICIAL SAID THAT DIRECT TALKS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES COULD TAKE PLACE CONCURRENTLY WITH THE CAIRO CONFERENCE OR IN THIRD COUNTRIES. IN ISRAEL, BEGIN AND DAYAN MET YESTERDAY TO WORK ON ISRAELI PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAIRO TALKS AND TO ASSESS THE PRESENT ATTITUDES OF THE KEY ARAB STATES. IN ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT, ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER GHALI DENIED PRESS REPORTS THAT ROMANIA WOULD BE PRESENT
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AT THE CONFERENCE AS AN OBSERVER. (SECRET)

10. ISRAEL. ISRAELI LEADERS SEEM CONVINCED THAT SADAT MIGHT BE WILLING TO CONCLUDE A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL IF HIS PRESENT INITIATIVE FAILS BECAUSE OF ARAB

RATHER THAN ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE. AS A RESULT, SEVERAL SENIOR CABINET MINISTERS--INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN AND EVEN DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN--REPORTEDLY ARE URGING PRIME MINISTER BEGIN TO SHOW SOME GENUINE FLEXIBILITY IN RESPONDING TO SADAT'S OVERTURE FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT, PRESUMABLY LEST THE CHANCES FOR EVEN A SEPARATE AGREEMENT BE LOST.

11. BEGIN HAS PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED FOR ISRAEL TO RETHINK ITS APPROACH TO KEY ISSUES, INCLUDING THE WEST BANK. COLUMNIST JOSEPH KRAFT, WHO HAS KNOWN BEGIN FOR MANY YEARS AND SAW HIM RECENTLY, SAID BEGIN SEEMS DEEPLY TORN BETWEEN ADHERING TO HIS STRONGLY HELD RELIGIOUS-POLITICAL PRINCIPLES AND SEIZING THE HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY THAT SADAT HAS OFFERED HIM.

12. THERE IS APPARENTLY A GENERAL CONSENSUS AMONG ISRAELI LEADERS THAT AN ACCOMMODATION AT LEAST WITH EGYPT IS NOW POSSIBLE. DAYAN STATED FLATLY IN AN INTERVIEW ON WEDNESDAY THAT SADAT WAS READY FOR A SEPARATE PEACE IF THE OTHER ARABS OPPOSED A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. GENERAL GAZIT, DIRECTOR OF ISRAELI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE WHOSE VIEWS ARE WIDELY SHARED BY OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS, ECHOED THIS ASSESSMENT IN A BRIEFING HE GAVE FOREIGN MILITARY ATTACHES YESTERDAY IN TEL AVIV.

13. GAZIT MAINTAINED THAT SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM WAS MOTIVATED BY THE BELIEF THAT EGYPT HAS NO MILITARY SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT EITHER IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OR LONGER TERM BECAUSE THE MIDDLE EAST
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WOULD SOON BECOME A "NUCLEAR AREA"--THUS IMPLYING THAT BOTH ISRAEL AND THE ARABS WOULD HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. GAZIT ALSO SAID THAT SADAT FACES SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AT HOME, AND LASTLY THAT HE REALIZED THE ONLY WAY HE COULD BREAK DOWN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO A SETTLEMENT WAS TO GO TO JERUSALEM.

14. GAZIT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SADAT IS NOT NOW INTERESTED IN A BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL AND THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS IN CAIRO WOULD HAVE TO DEAL WITH AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. HE ARGUED THAT SADAT, NEVERTHELESS, HAS NO MANDATE TO NEGOTIATE FOR THE OTHER ARABS AND THAT SYRIA AND THE PALESTINIANS HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEIR DESIRE FOR PEACE IS INSINCERE. AS A RESULT, GAZIT MAINTAINED THAT SADAT COULD REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL ON THE GENERAL TERMS OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND UNILATERALLY IMPLEMENT EGYPT'S PART, LEAVING THE OTHER ARABS TO FOLLOW SUIT AT THEIR DISCRETION.

15. THE ISRAELIS OBVIOUSLY HOPE THAT JORDAN'S KING HUSAYN WILL DECIDE TO JOIN THE NEGOTIATIONS AT SOME POINT, HELPING TO BUTTRESS SADAT'S POSITION IN THE ARAB WORLD AND TO ISOLATE SYRIA. BOTH GAZIT AND FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH--THE LEADER OF THE LIBERAL FACTION OF LIKUD--NOTED YESTERDAY THAT JORDAN IS AN IMPORTANT

FACTOR IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. INDEED, THE ISRAELIS SEEM TO FIND IT INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA HAVE NOT SUPPORTED SADAT MORE FULLY AND OPENLY AGAINST THE ARAB RADICALS.

16. MEANWHILE, DAYAN STRESSED BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS WITH EGYPT IN RECENT TALKS WITH WEST GERMAN OFFICIALS.
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ONE BONN FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL BRIEFED EMBASSY BONN, STATING THAT DAYAN:

(A) GAVE THE STRONG IMPRESSION ISRAEL SOUGHT A SEPARATE, BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT WITH EGYPT AND WAS PLEASED THAT OTHER COUNTRIES WERE EXCLUDED FROM NEGOTIATIONS;

(B) SHOWED NO FLEXIBILITY ON MIDDLE EAST ISSUES AND SAID ISRAEL WOULD PURSUE ITS POLICY OF SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES;

(C) CRITICIZED EUROPEAN COMMUNITY POSITIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AS WELL AS THE US-SOVIET CALL FOR RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE; AND

(D) AVOWED THAT THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY PRESSURED SADAT TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE AND THAT EGYPT DID NOT NEED THE BACKING OF SAUDI ARABIA OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY TO MAKE PEACE ALONE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

17. REJECTIONIST SUMMIT. THE HEADS OF STATE OF THE RADICAL ARAB NATIONS AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS ARRIVED IN LIBYA YESTERDAY TO DENOUNCE EGYPT'S PEACE INITIATIVES BUT POSTPONED THEIR MEETING UNTIL TODAY. THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT A RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND THUS HAVE NOT BEEN OUTSPOKEN IN THEIR SUPPORT OF THE TRIPOLI CONFERENCE.

18. THE OSTENSIBLE REASON FOR THE POSTPONEMENT WAS THE DELAYED ARRIVAL OF SOUTH YEMEN'S DELEGATION; THE REAL REASON COULD SIMPLY BE THE CONTINUING CONFUSION THAT HAS SURROUNDED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SUMMIT FROM THE BEGINNING. ALREADY IN TRIPOLI ARE SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD, ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE, PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION CHAIRMAN YASIR ARAFAT, PALESTINIAN

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REJECTIONISTS GEORGE HABBASH AND AHMAD JABRIL, AND AN IRAQI DELEGATION HEADED BY REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL MEMBER TAHA YASIN RAMADHAN.

19. THE SYRIAN DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION IN MOSCOW HAS TOLD US OFFICIALS THAT SOVIET PRESIDENT BREZHNEV, DURING HIS MEETING WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM ON WEDNESDAY, GAVE KHADDAM A MESSAGE FOR TRIPOLI GATHERING, EXPRESSING HIS PERSONAL HOPES FOR ITS SUCCESS. THE SOVIETS ALLEGEDLY REGARD THE SESSION AS BEING NECESSARY BECAUSE OF THE BAD EFFECTS OF EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL AND HIS CALL FOR A PRE-GENEVA CONFERENCE IN CAIRO.

20. ACCORDING TO THE SYRIAN DIPLOMAT, THE SOVIETS DO NOT AGREE WITH THE SYRIAN VIEW THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVES HAVE INEVITABLY POSTPONED A RECONVENING OF THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE AT GENEVA BUT DO ADMIT THAT ITS RESUMPTION HAS BECOME MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. SOVIET MEDIA HAVE NOT COMMENTED ON THE TRIPOLI MEETING BUT HAVE REPEATED ARAB COMMENTARIES TO EMPHASIZE THE STRONG ARAB OPPOSITION TO SADAT'S ACTIVITIY.

21. THE SYRIAN DIPLOMAT SAID FURTHER THAT KHADDAM HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN TO THE SOVIETS THAT IRAQ'S CALL FOR A MEETING IN BAGHDAD NEXT WEEK MIGHT HAMPER THE GATHERING IN TRIPOLI, BUT THE SOVIETS MERELY TOLD KHADDAM THAT THEY DID NOT WANT THAT ISSUE TO WORSEN SYRIAN-IRAQI RELATIONS.

22. ACCORDING TO THE SYRIAN, THE SOVIET LEADERS PRONOUNCED THEMSELVES IN FAVOR OF THE TRIPOLI MEETING AND DID NOT COMMIT THE USSR FOR OR AGAINST A CONCLAVE IN
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BAGHDAD. TARIQ AZIZ, A MEMBER OF IRAQ'S RULING REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL ARRIVED IN MOSCOW YESTERDAY AND PRESUMABLY WILL PUSH FOR A SOVIET ENDORSEMENT OF A BAGHDAD MEETING AS WELL AS FOR GREATER SOVIET SUPPORT OF THE RADICAL ARABS. (SECRET)

23. THE INTSUM IS BEING SENT BY IMMEDIATE PRECEDENCE TO KUWAIT IN RESPONSE TO KUWAIT 6717; KUWAIT PLEASE ADVISE IF AND WHEN THIS HIGHER PRECEDENCE IS NO LONGER NECESSARY. FUTURE INTSUMS WILL BE SENT IMMEDIATE TO OTHER ADDRESSEES ONLY IF SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED. VANCE

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